

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING –MINUTES  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016  
ROOM 217  
TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT**

**Call to Order/Roll Call:** 4:30 P.M.

**ATTENDANCE:**

**DRAC:** Members: Sheldon Crosby, Vice-Chair; Richard Hughes, Fred Fritz; Matthew C. McGrath, Kimberly Parsons-Whitaker. Alternate: Ray Giolitto. Absent: Jeffrey Gebrian.

**STAFF:** Todd Dumais, Town Planner; Catherine Dorau, Associate Planner

**REFERRAL FROM TOWN COUNCIL:**

1. **1445 New Britain Avenue-** *Application on behalf of Seritage SRC Finance LLC ("Applicant"), owner of 1445 New Britain Avenue, West Hartford, Connecticut (the "Property"). The Applicant requests modifications to the existing Special Development District ("SDD") #6, located at 1445 New Britain Avenue. The requested modifications include the redevelopment of both the Sears retail store and the Sears auto center into multiple retail and restaurant tenants. The redeveloped retail building will contain approximately 151,750 square feet and the redeveloped auto center will contain approximately 34,250 square feet (which includes 13,300 SF of unusable basement space). The facades of both buildings will be updated and refurbished. Associated site improvements including modifications to site parking, signage and landscaping are also requested. (Town Council Receipt on December 13, 2016. Town Council public hearing scheduled for January 24, 2017. DRAC receipt on December 22, 2016.) (Previous DRAC study sessions on June 16, 2016, July 14, 2016 and October 27, 2016). **No formal action was taken by the DRAC.***

Todd Dumais, Town Planner introduced the agenda item as a formal referral from the Town Council to the DRAC. The DRAC has had three prior study sessions regarding the proposal. The plans were referred by Planning to the Engineering and Fire Divisions, WHBHD, and the Police Department. Planning and Engineering have some outstanding comments and WHBHD will comment further when/if a restaurant submits detailed plans.

The architect for the project presented the architectural changes from the last study session. The gray color of the rendering of one of the buildings was reviewed. Also addressed was the quarter entry feature. The accent knee wall feature and entry signage was discussed as well as the two other entry signage features. As requested, one of the entry signs was moved. They considered the DRAC comments about the fins having 'too busy' an effect on the side and simplified it – streamlined it, took away some materials.

Two distinct entrances to the corner are now under one combined entry. Entrances now clarify where to enter for each tenant. Given the way the lower level is broken up the applicant feels they'll be able to change the number of future tenants without much difficulty. The other end of the building had revisions to the area that pleased the fire department. The corner of the Saks building was strengthened too. Pedestrian access near Starbuck's will be maintained. The outdoor dining area was identified on the plan. They raised all the base plains up in front of REI, not a surface material that can be damaged. How the canopy drains was discussed. It drains onto the sides pitching three ways – away from the building. It isn't heated – the DRAC recommended to 'look at that'. Bike racks should be strategically located and it was suggested to look at the existing bike designs.

Site changes were discussed. Sidewalks were added along New Britain Avenue, relocating the sign and they landscaped it. The bus shelter was relocated to the west. Pedestrian amenities i.e. planters and benches have been added at REI and Starbuck's. Bike racks that REI uses are not recommended by W.H. – BBSQ uses racks that are shaped like a bicycle. Post and loop or vertical racks are preferred by W.H. If a tenant wants a certain type of rack, they will supplement that with what W.H. is recommending.

The bus shelter is 22'long x 8'deep – and was pushed further away from the building by the CT Transit. The question arose – does the location work? Mr. Dumais mentioned one of his Planning comments looked for clarification regarding the bus stop details. Also provide dimension of the bus pull out lane. ADA ramps at access points need to be shown also – including the bus shelter area. The bus shelter should have protection from the parking area next to it and consideration given to the cars overhanging the grass area. Ice cleats for the bus shelter would be beneficial as well as a one foot gravel base surrounding the shelter for water from the roof. Protection for the bus shelter was discussed – perhaps a concrete stem wall to protect it from the cars.

It was noted the Shake Shack area 'feels safer'. Mr. Dumais suggested the pedestrian sidewalk should shift away from curb line of New Britain Avenue for the entire length. The applicant didn't see an issue with that. The emergency/fire Elmfield gate is in disrepair – if bollards or a drop bar is used consider making the spacing wide enough to get through for strollers/bikes/pedestrians. Vehicle light spray to the residential lot was mentioned. The use of an offset fence was noted as a possibility. The applicant would look at this area to address their concerns.

Proper drive aisle width and driveway access was discussed. Loading needs for the tenants would guide what is needed. Considerations should be given to delivery truck widths and turning requirements.

The multi-story building raises an issue with the rooftops equipment. They wanted any penetrations removed if they can, or set-back far enough. Saks wanted roof top units and ducting that pushed the units to the edge of the roof. They can raise the parapet about five feet to screen. Raising the parapet didn't seem to be a problem. Quieter condensers are proposed than what is there today.

It was asked if the applicant had a sign graphics criteria for the tenants. A sign area with dimensions is identified. Lighting shall be LED or fluorescent – no exposed raceways. Text format is included in the package as well as details on the drawings. The Town Planner will review the sign information on the plan and advise.

The applicant will make additional changes per tonight's discussion. It was agreed that a Go To meeting at a later date would suffice for the final review.

**TOWN PLANNERS REPORT: None**

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**

2. October 27, 2016 **Approved – Vote 4-0. Motion: Giollitto/Second: Hughes (Crosby, Hughes, Fritz Giollitto voting)**

**ADJOURNMENT - 6:00 p.m.**

C: Ron Van Winkle, Town Manager  
Kimberly Boneham, Deputy Corporation Counsel

Mark McGovern, Director of Community Services  
Essie Labrot, Town Clerk

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